5. Settlements and Boats

361 The Caribs have only a very small clearing at the place where they live, which is a place for the carbet and some smaller houses around it. This is planned so that the Europeans will not be able to know about them or capture them by surprise. It is for the same reason that the greater part of them are established on the windward side of the island, because here the waves are rough and terrain is high and it is difficult to gain access to it. Nevertheless, they are always near rivers because they would not be able to forego water either for drinking or for bathing. [279] There is a yard between the carbet and the other houses. Each one cleans the area of it in front of his own house. After supper they gather and talk around the fire, which they make if the evening is cool, until they say to each other "let us go in and sleep." On the next day they do not complain about the evening dew and they have not caught colds. [85] They [364] take away fishbones, peels, and their refuse from the tables, and throw them far away, because such things breed chiggers. [303]

●344 "We have to wrap cassava in thick leaves in the middle of the carbet." The carbet is the room, market place, work shop, storage place, dining hall, and dormitory, and the community house of the Caribs. It is almost like an oval cradle. Its height [sic] is sixty feet and its width is twenty feet. It is built plainly, but with all the care and utility one might imagine. The entrances are toward the center of the house, and are four diametrically opposed holes. These entrance holes are only four feet high. There are no other doors or windows, and there are no pegs or nails. There is only one storey and no chambers. There are no divisions nor hindrances inside the carbet which would impede 12 people walking side by side in a row. At the height of 7 feet there are beams 10 feet long to hang 100 to 120 cotton [513] hammocks, where the Caribs rest peacefully in perfect harmony without quarrels or noise. Women rarely enter this house except to serve the men. [476]

342 The Caribs have thatched houses (mánna) built a little like those of our peasants except that the roof is made of the upper part of reeds or of palmetto leaves which extend to the ground. They are oval in shape and lack windows entirely. In place of a door there is only a

301 two plates. These leggings are very much prized by the girls and [554] women because they are an infallible mark of their freedom; the slave women never wear them. Nevertheless, they are inconvenient and painful; when water gets these leggings they tighten so much that the women sometimes weep because of the pain it causes them.

9. Carbets, Houses, Beds, Pirogues, and Canoes

342 Concerning the dwellings, the houses or habitations of the Caribs, each family forms a settlement. The father of the family has his house, where he lives with his unmarried children [the young unmarried men]. The wives and all their unmarried children [boys and young unmarried women] live in their own houses around that of the father. These houses have no ceiling under the roof and are separated into two or three rooms. One is used for eating, another for sleeping and to receive guests who wish to visit them. Some have a special room where they put all the caconnes, that is to say, precious things like bows, arrows, clubs, axes, billhooks, and knives. 415 They also add their hammocks and their small baskets, where they keep their mirrors, scissors, necklaces, and chains of glass beads--- in a word all their ornaments.

The other utensils used for eating and drinking are kept in the kitchens. These consist of small earthenware jars; canaris, which are large jars used in making ollicou; and some other small vessels which they call coui. The coui are made of calabashes.

352 The rest of their furniture consists of small three-legged stools, carved from a single block of wood. They also use small tables with four wooden legs called matoutou, woven from latan [palm] leaves and reeds.

[344] Their gardens, where they plant provisions, are in the woods ● 344 separated from the place where they ordinarily live. In the midst of the houses there is a large common house [men's house] which they call a carbet. The carbet is always sixty to eighty feet long. They are made by putting large posts eighteen to twenty feet high into the ground. The upper ends of these posts are forked, and they lay a latan [palm] or some other very straight tree on these forks. Upon

344 this they fasten rafters which slope to the ground, and these are covered with reeds or latan [palm] leaves. The result is that it is very dark in the carbet. Light enters only through the door, which is so low that one cannot enter without stooping. The boys are in charge of cleaning and sweeping the inside of the carbet, as well as the grounds around it. The girls and young women perform the same duties in smaller houses. The carbet is oval shaped. In one side
[776] there is a small special opening through which the Carib contend the devils enter when summoned by their boye. The devils are the only ones who use this entryway.

513 The Caribs have no use for beds but always use cotton hammocks which they carry everywhere with them. Those who do not have cotton hammocks sleep on cabanes. These are made of four sticks
286 interlaced with cords of mahot bark. The wives sometimes spend a full year making a hammock. When they have spun seven or eight pounds of thick cotton thread which is smooth and well twisted, they arrange it on a loom as though they were making cloth. Then they weave the threads as our weavers do, except that the cloth is doubled and each end is left with a good foot of unwoven threads. The cloth is ten to twelve feet long and six feet wide.

To make the cloth into a hammock they take ten or twelve fathoms of aloes fiber cord, a bit thicker than our small cordage of the type called foit. Having bound together eight or ten of the loose threads at the end of the hammock, they fold this aloes cord into two-foot lengths, and then braid in eight or ten other loose threads. They make a fold in the fiber cord again and so forth until the end is reached. This being done they take another cord of aloes fiber as big as the finger, which is used to bind together all the folds of the first cord.

513 When they wish to sleep in it they tie the hammock with two big cords between large trees, or between two forks of the house supports. In tying, the hammocks are not taut but slack and bow-shaped. These hammocks are quite convenient and healthy because there is always fresh air. It is very pleasant to rest in one during the heat of the day in the cool shade under the trees. Almost all our Frenchmen use them, but chiefly those who are not married, for to sleep comfortably in a cotton hammock one should sleep alone.

513 When the hammocks are new they are as white as snow, but the
531 Caribs paint crude designs, in their fashion, with black paint which

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PLATE 95.—Carib war dance. (After Picard. Reproduced from Fewkes, 1907, pl. 9.)

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